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INFO ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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UNCLAS TASHKENT 002006

SENSITIVE
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [TSPL](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: STCU RELUCTANTLY PROPOSES TO SUSPEND OPERATIONS
IN UZBEKISTAN

REF: 09 TASHKENT 1385

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a November 3 e-mail, STCU Executive Director Andrew Hood informed us that the STCU Board of Governors meeting on November 19 in Kyiv is likely to decide to close the STCU Information Center in Tashkent. He said that no 2010 budget would be allocated for Uzbekistan and that STCU will cease further efforts to re-start activities until the GOU shows a willingness to re-engage. In the context of gradually improving U.S.-Uzbek relations, we should discuss this with the Uzbeks before any irrevocable decisions are made. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Uzbekistan has been a Party to the Science and Technology Center in Ukraine (STCU) since 1997. STCU has supported over 1100 Uzbek scientists, providing approximately USD \$15 million, plus 1 million Euros, in funding for over 100 projects in agriculture, bio-medical technologies, cotton production, nuclear safety, energy technologies and other fields of science and technology development in Uzbekistan.

¶3. (SBU) A changed attitude towards STCU manifested itself in 2006, and since that time STCU has had serious problems carrying out its program activities in Uzbekistan. The GOU refused to renew STCU's diplomatic accreditation after its expiration on March 1, 2006, and since then it has stopped issuing Host Government Concurrences required for STCU project proposals. The GOU blocked the STCU website within Uzbekistan, thereby limiting access to STCU resources by Uzbek scientists. For those programs that were already funded, scientists began experiencing delays in receiving STCU funds. The GOU further began denying visas for STCU auditors and denying permissions for STCU officials to travel to Uzbekistan for meetings with GOU officials.

¶4. (SBU) STCU has sent several official letters to the Uzbek MFA to draw the GOU's attention to these problems and to ask for renewed STCU-Uzbekistan cooperation. STCU has never received an official response from the GOU.

COMMENT

¶5. (SBU) The GOU's blocking and effective shutting down of STCU operations in Uzbekistan are bemoaned by almost all Uzbek

scientists. The STCU's important role in supporting science in Uzbekistan came up repeatedly during meetings with Uzbek scientists in June and July as part of negotiations on a bilateral U.S.-Uzbek Science and Technology cooperation agreement (reftel). While Uzbek scientists are not free to speak officially, they recognize that decisions on STCU-Uzbekistan relations are taken at the highest and most isolated government levels. These decisions are at variance with the Uzbek science community's strong support for continued cooperation with the STCU. As part of steadily improving U.S.-Uzbek relations, renewed cooperation with the STCU is an area we could explore within the context of the Annual Bilateral Consultation (ABC) process.

NORLAND